

Southampton Common Forum Discussion Document

Richer Engagement – Why? Who? How?

Why?

- The Common, like other City parks and open spaces is a City resource for City residents.
- It should be managed for, promoted to and provide facilities for the benefit of all City residents, irrespective of age, ability and background, within the legal framework / constraint of its status as Common land.
- Because of its physical position, local resident associations will likely have a strong interest in matters relating to The Common.
- Local RAs tend to be run by and attract their membership from the more affluent, more elderly and more educated amongst their residents.
- It is critical that the Forum reaches beyond the traditional constituency of local RAs to attempt to engage with and involve City community groups and individuals who may not have a formal voice.
- Everyone has a voice and every voice has a right to be heard and taken seriously, though it definitely will not be possible to “please all of the people all of the time”.
- In the current economic and social climate, wider engagement is a genuine challenge, but in order for the Forum to be taken seriously by SCC, it must be seen to have genuinely tried to engage, so efforts need to be obvious and documented.
- Engagement can be at many levels and is a 2 way process

In its activities, the Forum should strive to be:

- transparent, open, friendly, practical, informed and realistic
- pragmatic, not dogmatic
- collaborative and cooperative, not confrontational

Who?

To identify groups and individuals to add to mailing list / membership. The public meeting in June identified a wide range of formal and informal groups with clear and obvious interests in THE Common. These include, but in no way are limited to:

- local RAs
- local Groups
- local residents without RAs
- formal user groups
- informal users
- commercial operators (Cowherds, icecream concessions, Hawthorns Café etc.)
- local businesses
- University of Southampton / Solent
- Sports and fitness groups
- conservation and wildlife groups

- local councillors
- SCC managers
- SCC grounds teams
- others – the unknowns

What now needs to be considered by the formalised Forum is how best to actively contact and engage with these groups to include them in the Forum. The workshop on 17th Jan 2017 will discuss this and start to draw up ideas.

How – initial thoughts

Increase profile of SCF

- word of mouth – existing members and their social network
- word of mouth – existing members and their work network and professional contacts
- social media – appreciating that not everyone “does facebook”
- signage across The Common (funding needed)
- leaflets and talking to Common users (funding and volunteers needed)
- www site
- council www site and other publicity avenues

Actually start doing projects on the ground under the SCF banner ASAP so that the Forum is seen to be making a positive change on the ground and is more than a talking shop

- start small, with quick, easily identifiable, cheap projects that maximise publicity
- need to have memo of understanding with SCAPPS, Common Sense etc. over areas of responsibilities / who does what under what banner

Needed

- funding / grant / sponsorship / membership fees / fundraising / SCC pledged event monies for startup?
- 3rd party and personal accident insurance for workparties
- equipment and publicity for workparties
- promotional materials
- www
- training in conservation tasks?
- **volunteers**
- forum membership skills audit (via registration form)